



Promoting wellness in Alaskan villages: Integrating traditional knowledge and science of wild berries

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Abstract:

People draw upon multiple forms of environmental knowledge, from scientific to highly contextual local or traditional forms of knowledge, to interpret problems and gauge risks in complex socio-ecological systems. In collaboration with three remote Alaska Native communities, and using an interdisciplinary, participatory, and mixed methods research approach, we explored traditional ecological knowledge and scientific aspects of wild berries and the broader context of community health and environmental change. Combining site visits, key informant interviews, focus groups, survey questionnaires, portable field bioassays, and laboratory follow-up analyses, our research revealed the importance of local subsistence resources for community wellness. Multiple berry species were found to have powerful bioactive health properties for ameliorating metabolic syndrome as well as importance for community wellness. Communities differed in the degree to which they characterized berries as healthy foods and perceived environmental risks including climate change. Findings suggest the importance of incorporating locally available foods and socio-cultural traditions into community wellness programming. This article also discusses challenges and opportunities associated with transdisciplinary, participatory research with indigenous communities.

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Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Food/Water Security

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Food/Water Security: Nutritional Quality

Geographic Feature: ☒

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Arctic

Geographic Location: ☒

resource focuses on specific location

United States

Health Impact: ☒

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Mental Health/Stress, Other Health Impact

Other Health Impact: Well-being

Resource Type: ☒

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified